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INFLUENCES ON WORLD POLITICS

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One of the most striking lessons of the recent Peace Conference at Paris was that the relations among states cannot be adjusted according to any single formula. Many of the difficulties encountered over the boundaries of states, the allotment of territories, and the amount of indemnities resulted from the fact that at one time or by one party one factor was considered decisive, and at other times or by other parties or at different times by the same party chief weight was given to a quite different factor.

If the principle of ethnic unity was emphasized and the self-determination of nations aimed at, one result would follow. If geographic barriers and strategic boundaries were given consideration, an entirely different solution would be reached. Economic ties, such as the need for raw materials, or outlets for surplus production, or foreign loans and investments, would give a still different alignment. While historical traditions and the desires, often irrational and prejudiced, of the peoples themselves might demand yet another solution.

The influences that have brought about present conditions in interstate relations and that affect the solution of the problems of the future are extremely complex and closely interrelated. Yet some analysis of these underlying principles is essential to any understanding of world affairs. Without attempting to mention all the factors, to resolve them into their elements, or to weigh their relative importance, some of the controlling influences that affect world politics may be pointed out.

I. HISTORY

The past development of states and of interstate relations, whatever were the influences that determined such development in its day, becomes, when accomplished, a factor in later world politics. Many of the motives and policies of existing states can be explained only on the basis of their historic past. Friendships and enmities, handed down by tradition, survive long after the reasons for them have disappeared, and popular desire to avenge past injuries or to make recompense for former aid may run contrary to the demands of present-day practical politics. If the past could be wiped out and only the influences that are constant and the motives that are rational today should survive, world politics would take on an entirely different complexion.

States are what they are largely because of their past. They represent a long series of common efforts and struggles and ideals; and the memory of their past, as recorded in their history, profoundly influences what they now are and what they hope to become. The accumulated doctrines and institutions of mankind before our time are real forces in the life of today. Against them the keenest intellects and the highest enthusiasms often struggle in vain. Hard-won progress is often destroyed by the silent inertia of discredited fallacies and outworn institutions. States, like individuals, are in constant danger of viewing present problems with obsolete emotions and of attempting to solve them by obsolete reasoning. Historic traditions and the direct and indirect results of past development are powerful influences in world politics.

II. THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Relations among states, like all other human activities, take place on the stage set by nature, and are affected by various phases of the natural environment. Geographic

contour, climate, and natural resources are important factors in world politics. The size of states, their degree of isolation, and the natural direction of their external expansion depend largely upon geographical conditions. The strategic location of a state and the form of its natural frontiers influence its place and its policy in world affairs. Climate and resources affect the temperament of its population and the nature of its industries, with important consequences upon its government and external policy. Whether emphasis is laid on military or naval strength is largely a matter of geography. International friendships or enmities are often the accidental results of geographic propinquity. National protection by means of tariff barriers, and commercial rivalry for trade, shipping and financial investment are, at basis, the results of natural resources in the countries concerned. Battles, upon whose outcome the fate of nations has depended, have been decided by natural phenomena, such as wind, rain, fog or snow, beyond human control.

A study of the physical map of the earth is one of the first steps toward an understanding of the basic principles of world politics. Before man came on the earth the main outlines of much of his political history were already marked out by nature. In spite of man's best efforts to bring the world in which he lives under his control, the influence of the natural environment upon political evolution has been throughout all human history an important, and in many instances a decisive, factor.

III. RACE AND NATIONALITY

Just as the earth is divided by nature into a number of geographic units which are influential in determining the makeup and external relations of states, so the population of the earth is divided into a number of ethnic units, races and nationalities, that are important factors in the present political world. The feeling of racial unity and of racial

supremacy, with the corresponding dislike of peoples of alien descent, has been a permanent influence in political history. Kinship was a prime element in state origin, and tribal groupings often led to political organization.

Nationality, resulting largely from ties of common language, tradition, customs and religion, forms cultural rather than racial groups, but is no less powerful in politics. Modern states tend to coincide with national units, aim to extend their political control over people of the same nationality outside their borders, and attempt to assimilate into their culture all alien elements among their citizens. Nationality is closely related to history and geography, a national spirit often resulting from strong traditions of past political unity or from the occupation of a common territory. Much of the world politics of Europe during the past century revolved around the efforts of nationalities to secure political unity or independence; and the world politics of the future must take into consideration this powerful element in political psychology.

IV. GROWTH OF POPULATION

The natural fact that underlies expansion is increase in numbers due to the excess of births over deaths in a virile population. Some provision must be made for the resultant growth. No state looks with favor upon a rapidly declining birth rate, nor will submit without a struggle to the destruction of its excess population by famine or disease. Neither does a state view with composure the loss by emigration of considerable numbers of its population, often of the most valuable types. Nor do individuals, unable to make a living at home, always desire to live under an alien government and culture. Self-preservation is the first law among states as among individuals, and self-preservation includes the opportunity of growth, since growth is but the preservation of the increasing numbers.

Provision for a growing population, when the number that can be comfortably supported on the existing territory of a state has been reached, takes three main forms. In the first place, a state may push its frontiers into adjacent territory, expanding at the expense of its neighbors. Occupation of unclaimed or partially settled territory, wars of conquest and annexation, or incorporation of surrounding lands by peaceful union may mark this process. In the second place, the population, or parts of it, may leave the homeland and seek its fortunes elsewhere. Such was the nature of the earlier migrations of peoples, of the later colonization of newly discovered or sparsely settled areas, and of present-day emigration. In the third place, the population may remain at home, but develop a more intensive and highly organized economic life, thus enabling a given area to support a population of increasing density. In this way pastoral and agricultural life replaced the earlier, nomadic, hunting, fishing and root-grubbing existence, and modern manufacturing and commercial methods, with city life and world-wide markets, are replacing the earlier self-sufficient agricultural period.

Commercial expansion leads to tariffs, protectorates, spheres of influence, capitalistic investments, and colonial exploitation, as well as to international rivalries in navies, shipping, and markets. Colonial expansion once begun, territorial rivalry among states becomes itself a motive for expansion, and areas for future growth are marked out by the great powers for political purposes, far in advance of their present needs or their ability to colonize. And as the available territory is limited by nature and is practically all pre-empted at present, problems of expansion will meet increasing difficulties in the future. The pressure of population upon resources is growing rapidly, not only because of the enormous increase in the world's population during the past century, but also because of the rapidly rising standards of living. People today wish not only to live but to live well.

V. GOVERNMENT AND DIPLOMACY

A reciprocal relation exists between the internal organization and policy of a state and its external activities and interests. The form of a state's government exerts considerable influence upon its foreign policy. Monarchies and democracies take different attitudes upon many questions of international relations, and the groups or classes within a state that control its organization naturally keep their own interests in view when foreign policies are under consideration. Conversely, the issues and exigencies of world politics frequently react, sometimes gradually and imperceptibly, sometimes suddenly and violently, upon the home affairs of states, influencing their internal policies sometimes even revolutionizing their governments. Successful wars have made and unmade states and have elevated military heroes to political headship within their states.

Relations among states must be carried on through organs that are parts of the state's political machinery, hence the nature of the department of foreign affairs and of the diplomatic service becomes important. The rules according to which international relations are carried on have become more definite and more legal in their nature and their method of creation. Finally, there have been frequent attempts to establish international governmental organizations to deal with affairs common to a number of states. The Hague Court and the various international administrative unions, such as the Universal Postal Union, are examples. Projects of world union would carry this development to further lengths, and would make many problems of world politics the internal problems of a world organization. Under existing conditions, the governmental organization of each separate state, the machinery and methods of diplomatic intercourse among states, and the attempts at international union are all factors in world politics.

VI. MILITARY AND NAVAL STRENGTH

The position and influence of a state in world politics is often determined by its strength as an armed power. The warlike strength of a state is, of course, largely influenced by the number of its population and by its wealth and economic resources. Yet large and wealthy states are not always military and naval powers; while small states, by superior organization of their potential strength, may play parts in history out of all proportion to their size. The present relative positions of China and Japan as world powers illustrate these facts.

Whether a state will emphasize military or naval power depends upon conditions within the state concerned and in the world of its day. As long as the earth is divided into distinct political units which consider their separate interests paramount, force or the threat of force will be the final arbiter in case of serious dispute, and the only effective guarantee of international agreement. However desirable from an ethical point of view universal peace may be, the fact remains that practically all modern states were created by war, that war has been a constant and powerful influence in political evolution, and that the states that decide the affairs of the world today are those that possess physical power to enforce their will.

VII. ECONOMIC INFLUENCES

From the earliest beginnings of social life, a close connection can be traced between the activities and organizations concerned with the production and distribution of wealth and the activities and organizations that later became more distinctly political. The form of the state and the distribution of power within the state have depended largely upon the nature of its economic life and the form and division of property among its individuals and classes. Peaceful intercourse among states was in large measure the

outgrowth of the exchange of products, and much international law resulted from the need for uniform regulation and protection of commerce. Alliances among states frequently represent identity of economic interests. On the other hand, warfare has usually had an economic basis. The pressure of population upon food supply, with the resultant rivalry for land and, after manufacturing is established, for markets and raw materials, is a constant source of international difficulty.

The connection between business and politics is closer today than ever before, not only in the internal policies of states, but also in the larger issues of world affairs. Big business interests within the state naturally look to their government for protection and aid in their foreign ventures. The use of machinery, the factory system of production, the corporate form of business organization, and the improvements in the means of transportation and communication all react in various ways on the world policies of states. A large number of treaties and a considerable amount of diplomacy are at present concerned primarily with economic affairs.

While the political world is composed of a number of states, the economic world is in large measure a single unit. Capital is invested, resources are developed, and commerce is carried on in all parts of the earth, often regardless of political boundaries. From this situation numerous international difficulties arise. Tariffs and commercial restrictions may be used with almost as deadly effect as armies and battleships, and control of the world's shipping or of the world's finance or of certain key commodities may become the decisive factor in international strategy.

Capitalistic or commercial expansion frequently precedes governmental control. By means of "dollar diplomacy" or spheres of influence the independence of weaker states is practically destroyed. When the colonial or commercial ambitions of the great powers clash, worldwide wars may

result. And since warfare depends at present largely upon economic resources and organization, and upon the ability to withstand financial strain, economic conditions may determine the outcome of wars waged because of economic issues. The international policies of states seldom diverge very far from their national business interests.

VIII. POLITICAL IDEALS

Rational men invariably build up theories to explain their institutions and set before themselves ideals as goals of future effort. When causes and effects are recognized, men assume a new attitude toward them. As movements increase in intensity, individuals appear who seek to promote or retard them, or to use them for ulterior purposes. What was originally an unconscious tendency becomes a great stream of thought and activity directed toward a well-defined end. Political theories and ideals, themselves the result of complex influences, become in turn important factors in world politics. Such ideals often survive long after the conditions that created them have disappeared, are gradually transformed until they lose all traces of their original meaning. Certain political principles become part of the national tradition or are imbedded in national habits of thought. Some are primarily internal ideals and affect world politics indirectly; others are obviously ideals of external policy, growing directly out of international conditions and relations. Some are the one-sided or selfish principles of a single state, others are held jointly by a considerable number of states.

Ideals of liberty and of authority, of imperialism and of nationalism, of individualism and of socialism have been influential in world politics as well as in the domestic affairs of states. Such doctrines as the Balance of Power in Europe, the Monroe Doctrine in America, and the Open Door in the Far East developed primarily in the field of world politics. The ideal of world unity has exercised an

appreciable influence upon international law and the actual relations among states. Whatever policy lies at the basis of a state's action in foreign affairs, whether the result of carefully considered and definitely formulated principles, or the unconscious resultant of unanalyzed forces, such policy is an influence in world politics.

IX. RELIGION

During certain periods of history, religion has been a most important element in world politics. In primitive times, community of worship was one of the chief characteristics that distinguished one political group from another. Desire to spread religious ideas has been influential in conquest and expansion. The Crusades, the colonization of America, and the European wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries centered around religious motives. Missionary activity has often preceded colonial expansion, and in the recent world crisis religious interests were appealed to in the Balkans and among the Mohammedan peoples. On the other hand, the idea of universal human brotherhood, emphasized by Christianity, has been important in political integration and in internationalism. In general, religion is declining in importance as a political factor, although as one of the elements involved in nationality it will probably exert some influence for a considerable period.

X. GREAT MEN

The importance to be attached to the work of individual men in politics is always a disputed point. Sometimes great personalities seem to hold the destinies of states in their hands and to make or unmake governments at their pleasure. The thoughts and actions of individuals at certain periods seem to change the whole course of political development. Nevertheless, the great man is fundamentally dependent upon the social environment within which he is created,

and his influence is felt only when the world is ready for him. His greatness consists chiefly in that he expresses more successfully than others the spirit of his age, or that he is able to persuade his community to accept new ideas as in harmony with their conditions and their ideals. At the same time, the state, as a social institution, is composed of men, and may be altered by men. Free power of action exercised by individuals and by nations opposes the fatality of nature and of historical sequence. The work of a Napoleon or a Bismarck is not a negligible influence in international affairs. To a considerable extent, therefore, individuals holding prominent places in government or exercising leadership in political opinion are factors in world politics.

To the foregoing factors, which for purposes of study may be considered separately, many others should be added if a complete survey of the influences that affect world politics were attempted. The state represents but one phase of man's life and but one form of social organization, and is necessarily conditioned in its nature and in its relations by other human activities and institutions. The growth of intelligence and of wide-spread education, scientific discovery and invention, and numerous other factors that seem at first thought far removed from the sphere of world politics are nevertheless of considerable importance. International public opinion is beginning to be a real and powerful force in the modern world, and the power of organized propaganda is almost unlimited. Only in broad outlines, however, with numerous omissions and with faulty perspective and proportion can the causes that underlie world politics be traced. A realization of the complexity of the problem should, however, make for a more tolerant and broad minded attitude in foreign relations.